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CLARK COUNTY
WASHINGTON

N E W S R E L E A S E

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Vancouver Lake still closed to swimmers ***Officials also recommend against swimming in Lake River***

Vancouver, WA— Continued warm weather has intensified the algae bloom in Vancouver Lake, with levels of toxin-producing blue-green algae remaining above World Health Organization guidelines. As a result, a swimming ban at the lake is still in effect. Clark County Health Department and Vancouver-Clark Parks & Recreation are advising the public to avoid direct water contact and ingestion of the lake's water. Toxins from the algae can potentially affect human health and can be deadly to small pets that drink the water. While Vancouver Lake Park remains open, the county has restricted use of the lake as follows:

- **No swimming**
- **No wind surfing or sail boarding**
- **Keep animals away from the lake water**
- **Boating and fishing are allowed, but avoid contact with the lake water**

Officials also recommend against swimming in Lake River between Vancouver Lake and the mouth of Salmon Creek. Lake River, which drains from Vancouver Lake, was tested on Tuesday and found to have similar levels of blue-green algae in its southern half.

What are the signs and symptoms of toxic algal poisoning?

Drinking or accidentally swallowing lake water with algae that are producing toxins can result in liver injury, nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea. Some toxins can also damage the nervous system and lead to muscle tremors, paralysis, and respiratory distress. Skin exposure can result in irritation or allergic reactions with rashes and blisters around the nose and mouth. Children especially should be kept from entering the lake since they are more likely to ingest the water than adults. Symptoms may occur within minutes, or appear hours or days later.

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What animals do the toxins affect?

All warm-blooded animals, including people, cats, dogs, livestock, and waterfowl.

What if I swam in the lake recently?

If you swam in the lake after July 15th and have any of the signs and symptoms listed above, you might want to contact your health care provider.

What is a blue-green algal bloom?

A blue-green algal bloom is a rapid and massive buildup of algae that gives the water a scummy texture and a green color. Occasionally it may appear bluish, brownish, or reddish green. Blue-green algal blooms can occur anytime from May to October during warm weather. Algal blooms are unsightly, cause an unpleasant odor, and can produce dangerous toxins.

What causes algal blooms?

Warm, sunny weather and the presence of nutrients can cause algal blooms. Nutrients that enter the water and promote algal blooms include phosphorus and nitrogen, found in fertilizers and in agricultural, human, and animal waste.

Are there any other blue-green algal blooms in Clark County at this time?

The health department is unaware of other blue-green algal blooms in the county. Because of the potential for these blooms to occur in other bodies of water, the public is urged to watch for conditions of blue-green algal blooms and to report them to the health department at (360) 397-8428. Conditions may include:

- Water that looks like thick pea soup or green paint
- A thick mat or foam on the beach
- An unpleasant odor
- Extremely small organisms that are hard to pick up and hold, unlike more common but harmless green algae, which has long, bright green strands
- Dead fish, waterfowl, or other animals

What happens next?

The health department and Vancouver-Clark Parks and Recreation will continue to test for the presence of toxins in the lake and will advise the public when the lake is safe to use again. Generally, cooler weather, rainfall, and reduced sunshine will lead to the breakup of an algal bloom. It could take several weeks for the algal bloom to end and the toxins to dissipate. Results of water testing at Vancouver Lake are posted on the Health Department Web site at www.clark.wa.gov/health/environmental/beaches/Vancouver-Lake.html.

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